

MAR 18 '22

That pin had the form of a crocodile whose body tapered sharply pointed. It was the "double" of a sacred saurian symbol which the Egyptians deposed after the embalming, by the side of the defiled monsters in which they believed, still resided their power. At times, indeed, that pin seemed animated and lit as with flashing lights, specially in the presence of the Indian Ramou. It brought back confusedly to the memory the museum of professor Terrande with its sphinxes, sarcophages and statues and the vague restlessness of the Pharaohs before the prodigies of the magicians and the religious terror of the dark excavations, "Cavern where the mind dares not go too far."

Ten years back, the great Egyptologue had brought that pin from the necropolis of Medebek in which he had met the sceptical novelist Oscar Heckey. This meeting showed him how much attraction that land had for all kinds of neutralities. The learned professor had also found in that wonderful Egypt a jewel, dearer to his heart than all the treasures of his collection: Alice, a little acrobat whom his pity had withdrawn from the brutalities of a wixen. This child he sent to college, then adopted and finally gave his consent to her marriage with a young magistrate, Mr. de Cherizy.

On Alice's twentieth birthday the professor gave an evening party, Heckey being invited. The notorious novelist could hardly go anywhere without meeting some old enemy or making a new one, here it was the actress Jeannine Souverain exclaiming when she saw him: "I should kill him with pleasure". While he, at the time where others admire the "double" of the sacred crocodile amused itself by defying sarcastically the animals deities and, to him, the fools who regarded them with veneration. His repulsion and hatred increased, says he, when one of his friends was the victim of an alligator. His narration evoked the accident, the fall in the Gange, the agonising struggle between the man and the filthy beast, then the final swallowing up of them by the water red with blood...he does not feel on him the cursing looks of the quivering Ramou. Now the artistic part of the evening starts. A Hindou dancer harmoniously miming hieroglyphics while Heckey in a room near by takes a dose of the calming morphia. As his absence is long...he is anxiously called; as he does not answer the door is forced open on to the blackness. Then the lights showed the corpse of Heckey and in his neck the living pin still quivering. Each one looking aghast for the one and only door was locked, thick iron bars protected the unic window and the sacred symbol had been seen long after the withdrawal of the novelist at its usual place, empty at present. "Gods has avenged himself" whispers Ramou.

The circumstances of Heckey's death routed the police. The suspicions which weighed on Jeannine Souverain, because of her malevolent wish, also on others were relinquished. They vainly wondered who could be the murderer, but before classifying the case, the police asked the help of Christophe Rozes. Rozes was a student of occult love with the mind of a modern detective, but as soon as he started his inquiries, frightful phenomena began to manifest in his house, his house keeper became the victim of terrifying visions and he, himself was greatly troubled. Lamps lit up and went out again themselves, luminous hieroglyphics appeared warning him to fear the God's anger symbols of death in the tarot-cards turned up of themselves. One night he asked a friend to help him, they both saw a monstrous crocodile, gigantic replica of the living pin, coming to them, its wide mouth open on its double row of teeth; fear made his friend faint away. But those dangers could not have a very lasting effect on a man knowing a few of the esoteric secrets as well

as exorcisms. The monster disappeared, Rozers went resolutely down in the cellar. What happened? The result was that the occultist reappeared pale and discomposed, but with a triumphant smile on his lip! He knew the culprit - he could give him ~~ke~~ up to the police.

But when he had heard from the murderer the motives which, in his despair had led him to believe on the necessity of Heckey's disappearance, Rozers felt himself yielding to the pity and forgiveness in his heart.

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